THE WHITE GATE AND OTHER POEMS

LORMA LEIGH

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THE WHITE GATE

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The White Gate And Other Poems

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TO MY FRIENDS

AND

ONE IN PARTICULAR

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THE WHITE GATE

The White Gate.

SOMETIMES I dream, at twilight,
In my garden's quiet peace;
When the gracious dusk envelops,
And life's sorrows seem to cease.

I gaze beyond the gateway
With its trail of woodbine sweet,
And dream I hear the footfall
Of your little spirit feet.

Some day I too shall follow
Your steps through the woodbined gate,
My eyes no longer weeping—
My heart no more desolate.

No need to tear the woodbine,
For God's invisible hand
Will lead my soul through the gateway
And then I shall understand.

Renunciation.

I WONDER is there recompense for this
Renunciation of Life's very best—
Or what we deem Life's best.—
Perhaps it is
In giving up—we gain oblivion's rest.

Will God remember or forget the strife
Of this poor heart which must be passionless?
How strange is love, how sad a thing is Life—
The best it gives us here—forgetfulness!

Thoughts.

DAWN! with the wonders night concealed,
Noon! with Life's beating heart revealed,
Eve! with her gentle touch; and tender
Night! with her silver pall of splendour.

Apart.

YOU are so far from me you seem
As but the echo of a dreamer's dream,
But waking still I hold you close and see
A mirage of our love's sweet ecstasy.

* * * * * * * *

Oh! vision fair of Heaven more than earth
Whence do you come, who gave your spirit birth?
Help me forget that love to us was born,
Knowing I needs must go my way alone.

Earth.

WHITE envelopèd Earth.
Clad in the fallen snow,
Passionless Earth,
Cold is your touch, I know.

Tender and fragrant Earth,
Waking to life again,
Soft yielding Earth,
Warm with the sweet spring rain.

Blazoning crimson Earth!
Pulsing with life and love,
Responsive Earth,
Kissed by the Sun above.

Mystical carpeted Earth,
With dead leaves of desire.
Disrobing Earth,
Dying beneath Love's fire.

A Leavetaking.

LET me not see your eyes
'Tis better so,
For with their look might come
Life's overthrow.

For loving you, my own
Might then reveal,
All I have tried in vain
To quite conceal.

I cannot speak my love,
'Tis fate's decree
That speechless love is all
'Tween you and me.

So it must be goodbye.
But place your hands
In mine; and I can say
She understands.

Night.

HOW hushed the silent heavens
are!
The clear, cold moonlight lies
On all around, and one bright star
Shines forth from out the skies.

Shine on, oh star! and let thy beams
Illumine all my way;
And I will hope, nor wake from dreams
Until the breaking day.

Earth, Sea, and Wind.

EARTH, sea, and wind
Chant your great song of love;
Heaven, space, and time
Echo it from above.

Blow out your strength, ye stormy winds of
Fate,
To this end born, from time predestinate;
To this end live, to this end die:
In death to find completer unity.

Alone.

I DID not stay to think what would
befall
My life, nor count the cost of risk-
ing all
My love in one frail bark.

Now storm-clouds gather fast, my sails are torn
By ruthless winds; and I am left forlorn—
Rudderless on Life's sea.

Three Days.

DO you remember, Love, the day we met?
The sun shone bright, though all the earth was wet
With glistening drops; like tears by Angels shed—
And how the sunset sky blazed gold and red!

Yet once again we met, and then the dawn
Was flushed with rosy light—a peerless morn—
A vision of fair seas—a land of flowers—
Oh Love, I thank you *one* such day was ours.

And yet another day, ere all was o'er,
Wild foaming waves madly caressed the shore;
Bare trees and rain-drenched earth around us lay,
No ray of gold to gild love's dying day.

Spring.

SPRING! and the blossoming orchard,
Spring! and the call of a bird,
Spring in the heart of a maiden,
Spring! what a magical word.

Spring and the daffodil golden,
Spring and the hyacinth blue,
Violets in the warm wet earth,
At your touch they live anew.

Spring in your verdant raiment,
It is you that makes us one
With the beating heart of nature;
One with the stars and the sun!

Spring in the love-bewildered air,
Spring in the warm scented rain.
Exquisite season of promise!
Exquisite season of pain!

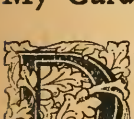
If Love were all.

IF love were all, then I would take your hand,
And we would wander to some far-off land
Where sunshine is, where lilies fair and tall
Fill the air with fragrance. If love were all!

If love were all! then I would kiss your eyes,
Seeing in them my promised Paradise.
Weave for your brow a garland posy rare,
Kissing the loosened tendrils of your hair.

If love were all! I should not stand apart
With empty arms, and lonely, aching heart,
That may not comfort her, nor yet forget
The leaden burden of a great regret—
If love were all!

My Garden.



DAWN in my dewy garden,
Dawn, and the fresh sweet smell
Of the unused day in its pureness,
In the garden I love so well.

Noon in my drowsy garden,
Noon, and a quivering heat,
A lark soaring free in high Heaven,
"Whirring" insect wings at my feet.

Night in my moonlit garden,
Night, with her subtle spell
Cast over the slumbering flowers
In the garden I love so well.

Dawn, and the rosy morning!
Noon, and the pulsing heat!
Night, and the glamour of moonlight!
In each is my garden sweet.

Only a cottage garden,
On which the sunlight fell,
When I said "good-bye" to the flowers
In the garden I love so well.

Dawn.

A MISTY September morning,
Grey dawn in the sky o'erhead,
The promise of splendour flames
in the East,
Turning from rose to red.

The air is still, its autumn breath
Cool, fresh as from mountain streams;
And the silence a living silence is,
Waking from deathless dreams.

Strange shapes grow out of silver mist,
Dim, ghostlike the trees appear;
Nature awaking in tremulous mood,
Knows that the day is near.

The sun bursts forth, a bridegroom bold,
In his own grand kingly way,
And Earth in her beauty responsive gives
A gladsome autumn day.

Then and now.

SORROW and I no strangers are
joy has taken my hand.
That you, oh love! stood by my
side, I did not then understand.
All thoughtlessly I went my way,
content with mirth and youth;
Until Life's tears had dimm'd my
eyes, I had not yet learn'd the
truth.

Then in despair I cried aloud: "Love, has love
pass'd me by?"
And like an echo answer came, "He has waited
patiently."
Then looking up I saw you there, waiting with
outstretch'd hand.
I felt your arms . . . you kissed my mouth . . .
and *now* I can understand.

Joan.

BRIGHT curling hair!
Rose petal downy cheek—
None can compare
With Joan.

So sweet a mite!
A bundle of soft curv'd
Dimpling delight
Is Joan.

Two soft warm arms,
Two little feet, pink toed—
In truth all charms
Has Joan.

Those clinging hands,
That lisping, baby voice
Are Royal commands
From Joan.

A "Good-bye" kiss,
Softer than flake of snow
On you I press,
Sweet Joan.

Love's Garland.

OUT of the sky a day was born
tender and fragrant and new,
Fresh as the flowers I cull'd at the
birth of the day for you.

Out of my heart there grew a rose, beautiful, soft
as the dew
On summer's morn, or butterfly's wing, I called
it "Love of you."

Out of my rose there grew a thorn, 'twas sharp
and bitter as rue,
It tore my heart, and in grief and pain I called it
"Love untrue."

The Shepherd.

OVER the hills where shadows lie,
Into the distance dim,
Gazes your faithful shepherd,
Waiting your coming to him.

Just as you came in that spring-time
With burnished hair unbound;
Youth and grace in you meeting;
Joy songs in the air around.

One spring-time you had together—
The hawthorn blossom spread,
The lambs skipped in the meadows,
A lark sang overhead.

* * * * *

Your shepherd lives in *that* spring-time,
(How long ago it seems!)
And tending his sheep he listens
For the step that comes in dreams.

To one Beloved.

TAKE me away to some forgotten place
Where nature's pulses beat unheard, unknown,
Where I can feel the salt spray on my face,
And hush my sorrow to the sea's sad moan.

Where we can love, and rest a little while,
Lay down the heavy burden of the years.
Love of my life, could I but make you smile,
Love of my life, could I but share your tears.

Sunset.

LINGER awhile and watch this scene so fair—
It will not last as now, its beauty rare
Will fade into the night, and all grow dark
And dim, till it be light.

These moorland heights, these valleys bathed in fire,
Bring to my heart a nameless vague desire
To grasp the best in life, to *be*, to *do*,
Tho' all else fail, nature herself is true.

Through all my being the sunset's glory thrills,
A limitless delight my spirit fills,
I fear to-morrow, lest the morn redeems
This perfect night's sweet mockery of dreams.

Life's Pilgrimage.

ABOVE my head twilight and dark
are creeping;
Beneath my feet the silent river
flows—
And through the trees there comes
a sound of weeping—
Tears from a tired heart—who
knows?

* * * * * *

Long through the night, I dream of happy
laughter,
Dream of my love, and gone are all my fears—
Sleeping, I dream no waking follows after,
Waking, I *know* Life's Pilgrimage is tears.

Commerce.

YEAR by year you city dwellers
Striving in the market place,
Where your souls and blood are bartered,
Running an unequal race.

When the city streets are dusty
And the summer sun beats down
With its fierce unbroken radiance,
Over waste of roofs and town,

Dream you not of peaceful country
Far removed from city strife,
And the sweltering pit of commerce
Sapping all the joy of life?

Dream you not of cooling breezes,
Shadowed lanes of leafy trees,
Flowers and birds—untrammelled freedom—
Would you be content with these?

Tired.

BETTER to laugh than weep
Oh! tired heart,
Better to smile through tears
And play your part—

Better that none should know
The secret pain
That mounts like incense
To the dreamer's brain—

Better a dreamless sleep
Perchance—and rest;
Be utterly at peace—
Oh! this were best.

Twilight.

OH! the magic of the twilight,
And the deepening into dusk.
Oh! the whispering of the flowers
And the air as sweet as musk.

Oh! the dim and soft between light,
And the blue-grey silver sheen;
Tremulous, mystic wonder
For the world of things unseen.

Oh! quiet peace and dreaming;
Soft note of a nesting dove;
Wind whispering along the grass
And a pearl pale sky above.

Love's Reward.

THROUGH love from darkness unto perfect day;
Through love, from wandering in great dismay
In dreary places, humble and alone;
Through love, I come to share with thee love's throne.
Let me but live, and by my life so prove,
Not all unworthy am I of thy love.
Oh, my belovèd one! so fair, so good,
Emblem of nature's sweetest womanhood,
Now do I dedicate my life to thee,
Through time unending, to eternity!

Winter.

LAST are those Summer days,
Fled all too soon;
Gone are the sun's bright rays
With that fair June.

Now do the flowers sleep
Under the snow,
Warm in their beds they keep,
Whispering low.

Telling of hopes of Spring,
Soon to be here;
Then will the woodland ring
With voices clear.

And the birds once again
Carol in song,
All in the glad refrain,
Winter has gone!

Love and Youth.

OUTH and love met in Life's springtime
(Love that is true and strong)
But youth, unthinking, listened
Not to the lover's song.

Yet once again in Life's summer
(The world was rosy hued)
Youth in her glowing beauty
Met Love—and understood.

Parting.

RUEL it is to say goodbye and part;
Yet it must be to-day—this very hour.
Nay! turn not towards me—do not look this way—
You make it harder, Love, for me to say "goodbye."

Why must it be you ask? Dear one, you know
How duty stands between our love; and so
This is goodbye.—I wonder do you guess
How hard it is to give this last caress,
To say the words—which make me
Outcast from the land of love.

But life will hold no sweeter joy than this,
No tie more binding than my love for you:
I go to duty 'mid Life's hard highways.
God give you peace, and unremembered days.

Amaranthe.

HOW I love the woods, when the trees are wet
With the shining tears of Heaven,
Hanging like pearls from their fringe of green,
And the clouds above are riven
With gleaming skies, whose silver sheen
Brings beauty to Earth from Heaven.

How I love the smell of the sodden earth,
Which under my feet is springing,
The tender twitterings of the birds
That for very joy are singing,
The wonder stories of the wind
The evening breeze is bringing.

How I love the hum of the drowsy bee,
And the "whirr" of the insect wings,
The pulsing breath of the noontide heat
In which immortality rings,
The quivering shadows at my feet,
The note of the lark who sings!

How I love the morn when the air is sweet
And the grass is heavy with dew,
The 'wakening flowers turn to the sun
As if for his favour they sue;
And lovingly he shines, that they
May blossom and bud anew.

The White Gate

How I love the night, when the stars are dim
With a vagueness beyond all speech.
Veiled in the moonbeam's mystical light
What infinite lessons they teach.
Life's hidden meanings seem more plain,
The peace of Heaven in reach.

New Year in the Bush.

BELLS are ringing in England
To welcome the new year in,
And I am sitting alone out here
Far away from my kith and kin.

Here's luck to my pals at home,
God bless 'em, where'er they be.
I don't often dream of the days gone by,
But to-night they come back to me.

I think of the good old times,
The changes the years have seen,
Sitting alone 'neath the Southern Cross
Thoughts turn to the "might have been."

But that don't help a chap much
In his daily round of life,
'Tis best to think of things as they are
And "she" is another man's wife.

I have my station, stretching
As far as the eye can see,
And farming, and shooting and hunting,
Make a good enough life for me!

Here in my lonely watchings
I forget the jar and strife,
The sheep and cattle are all my care,
And this is what I call life.

The White Gate

Different to Mayfair drawing rooms,
With their Society teas,
Is my frugal fare 'neath a gum tree,
The wattle scent strong on the breeze.

Lonely? It may be lonely
When one's finished work and toil,
But I have the mail bag to look for,
Bringing news from my native soil.

I get my weekly papers,
A God-send to men like me,
They keep one in touch with other things
Happening over sea.

I've only Nature to talk to,
As varying in her ways
As woman, but more to be trusted,
For she's sometimes the same two days.

Aye, and she speaks to one straight,
Gets at the heart of a man
And appeals to his better nature,
As only the beautiful can.

She never turns a deaf ear,
She gives with a lavish hand,
Whether in joy or sorrow we come,
She seems always to understand.

Here, when watching the cattle,
One has time to pause and think
Of the follies we all have committed,
And wish we had stopped on the brink.

The White Gate

I know the women were fair!
I know that the wine was red!
That is all passed and naught to me now,
I have chosen this life instead.

What is the good of that life?
We most of us go to the wall,
And end by finding it dead sea fruit
With after taste bitter as gall.

Give me my work in the Bush,
Away from the din and strife,
The sheep and cattle are all my care,
And this is what I call life!

The Old Maister.

(*As spoken by his Stable Boy.*)

WHAT! don't 'e know the Old Maister?
Our Maister of 'ounds I mean—
A beggar to ride with the best of 'em,
Firm in 'is seat and that keen
There baint no one to touch 'im
Least not in these parts about,
You should see 'im swing by in the saddle
You should see 'im when 'ounds be out!

Sportsman? well you're about right there
From the crown of 'is 'ead to 'is 'eel
A sportsman in all 'is dealings
'E's a man with a 'eart that can feel—
And not be ashamed to show it;
While if there be trouble about,
The old chap is certain to 'elp 'e,
As no one who knows 'im will doubt.

Tender to women and children
If they 'appen to come in 'is way;
'E baint no soft 'earted chicken
But some'ow 'e knows what to say.
They likes a kind word do the women
When it comes from a neighbour or friend
It doan't cost a lot to be civil,
I be sure it do pay in the end.

The White Gate

Temper? well there now you beat me,
But I wouldn't give much for a man
Who couldn't rap out on occasion,
Them as doan't is only a sham.
Not the real genuine article,
A soft mouthed make believe.
We doan't raise that sort down 'ere, sir,
'Ere under Martin Cleeve.

You should 'ear the old chap's language,
When his 'unting girths baint tight,
With his masterful "'Ere, 'Arry,
Can't you girth a 'orse up right
Without me 'aving to show 'e"
I'm blest if 'e baint a sight.

Then on a fine 'unting morning,
When the mare gets into 'er stride
Squire settles down to business
And shows how an old 'un can ride.
The mare she's a bit of a flyer
But vice? why bless 'e sir—no—
Only sit firm in the saddle
Give 'er 'er 'ead and she'll go.

Go like the wind—she's a beauty
A...y...o...i...gone away!
She'll lead 'em all through the run, sir,
And want more at the end of the day;
For she doan't like to be beaten,
She'll go while she 'as breath
It baint her fault I can tell 'e
If she baint in at the death.

The White Gate

Aye! that's a fine sight to see, sir,
When the stag 'e turns at bay
And the 'ounds be almost on 'im
You know 'e 'as 'ad 'is day.
Then the field comes 'urrying up
Lord! what a mixture they are,
The swell from town and the farmers' boy
For they come from near and far.

The lady that rides and the lady that doan't,
And the lady that thinks she can,
And the "toff" whose breeches be spotless clean
But you couldn't call 'im a man,
See 'im come to a stiffish bit—
Why 'e'll turn and play about.
Give me a man who forgets 'is skin
And rides straight when 'ounds be out.

Then when the day's sport is over
And Maister and mare a bit "done",
'E thinks of his pipe and 'is fire,
But 'e talks of the glorious run!
And as 'e rides 'ome through the village
The little 'uns run to 'is side—
(I said 'e'd a kind 'eart before, sir,
And doan't know the meaning of pride).

'E's just the right sort for a Maister—
A Maister of 'ounds I mean—
For 'e goes straight in 'is life too
And—by the Lord 'e is keen.

I 'unt? why yes, sir, of course I do,
I 'unt on shanks' mare,
I baint particular what I rides,
So long as it gits me there.

A glorious country for sport, sir,
Nowhere to touch it I know,
You can 'unt with eight packs of 'ounds, sir,
From where 'e be standin' now,
And if 'e know them as wants sport, sir,
The best that the kingdom can give,
Tell 'em to come to the West, sir,
Tell 'em to come 'ere—and live.

When I die.

WHEN I am dead I should not like to think
A bricked-in grave enclosed my earthly form,
Nor city's traffic passed my resting place,
And towering buildings hid the sun at dawn.

Then let me lie in some secluded place
Where violets will scent the air in Spring,
And petals fall from wind-blown hawthorn trees,
And softly birds my requiem will sing.

So let me rest, until the outward part
Absorbed is by the elements again,
My soul will know the sunrise on the hills,
Sheen of the buds in Spring, earth-scented rain.

And I shall understand, and live Soul-life;
Be one with stars, and sea, with moon, and sun,
For every pulse of life that stirs the earth
Is born of Death, and all that lives, is one.

Love is Life.

IM is the gracious dusk of early night,
And faintly soft the bird-calls fill the air,
Beauty of sight, and sound is everywhere.

* * * * * *

And as the sleeping flowers spill their scent,
The perfumed night calls with insistent voice
Love is life, and love is here—Rejoice!

The Mask.

IF I could lay aside the mask and weep;
My tears, like soft refreshing rain
Might wash out pain.

But I must smile, be gay, and never show
My aching heart the gaping world,
Nor eye, tear-pearled.

Till Death—gentle as lover to his bride—
Shall close the eyes that may not weep,
In dreamless sleep.

The Gift.

DIM night is here, and soothingly she stills
The restless day, the heart-beats of the hills.
And silver pale the moon is through the mist,
And all the sleeping land by silence kissed.

* * * * * *

On such a night as this, love took my hands
And led me willingly through joyous lands,
Through limitless delights of soul and sense;
Then whispered in my ear "Love's recompense
For shadowed years" . . . and in the moonlight mild
He gave into my arms a little child.

"In Manus Tuas—."

WHEN thunders roll
And lightnings slash the sky,
God of the Elements
Stand by.

When warring-worlds
Make men in thousands die,
God of the Battle-field
Stand by.

When terrors lurk
And hearts in anguish cry,
God of Humanity
Stand by.

When storm blasts rage
And lives in peril lie,
God of the Universe
Stand by.

When life ebbs low
And death is drawing nigh,
God of Eternity
Stand by.

My Little Love.

MY exquisite little love;
My love all dainty grace,
With the speedwell blue in her eyes,
And innocent childish face.

My exquisite little love
I hardly dare to touch
Your rose-palmed, dimpled little hand;
Loving you overmuch.

My exquisite little love,
Your little timid feet
If I can save from one rough stone
My life will be complete.

Early Morning.

MY hands were scented with dew-
pearl'd thyme
And the sweetness of the morn,
The wind rippled lightly thro'
waving grass
And fields of ripening corn.

Sometimes the sun laid gold on the green,
Shadow chased shadow away.
Southward far distant, like opal the sea
Touched by the dawn-light lay.

High in the branches voices of birds
The woodland with joy-notes rings
Drawing my soul with their wonderful song
To the soul of happy things.

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